CHAPTER 7A. GENERAL

Section 7A.01 Need for Standards

Support:

It is important to stress that regardless of the school location, the best way to achieve reasonably safe and effective traffic control is through the uniform application of realistic policies, practices, and standards developed through engineering judgment.

Pedestrian safety depends upon public understanding of accepted methods for efficient traffic control. This principle is especially important in the control of pedestrians, bicycles, and other vehicles in the vicinity of schools. Neither pedestrians on their way to or from school nor road users can be expected to move safely in school areas unless they understand both the need for traffic controls and how these controls function for their benefit.

Procedures and devices that are not uniform might cause confusion among pedestrians and road users, prompt wrong decisions, and contribute to crashes. To achieve uniformity of traffic control in school areas, comparable traffic situations need to be treated in a consistent manner. Each traffic control device and control method described in Part 7 fulfills a specific function related to specific traffic conditions.

A uniform approach to school area traffic controls assures the use of similar controls for similar situations (which promotes uniform behavior on the part of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists).

A school traffic control plan permits the orderly review of school area traffic control needs, and the coordination of school/pedestrian safety education and engineering activities.

Guidance:

A school route plan for each school serving elementary to high school students should be prepared in order to develop uniformity in the use of school area traffic controls and to serve as the basis for a school traffic control plan for each school.

The school route plan, developed in a systematic manner by the school, law enforcement, and traffic officials responsible for school pedestrian safety, should consist of a map (see Figure 7A-1) showing streets, the school, existing traffic controls, established school walk routes, and established school crossings.

The type(s) of school area traffic control devices used, either warning or regulatory, should be related to the volume and speed of vehicular traffic, street width, and the number and age of the students using the crossing.

School area traffic control devices should be included in a school traffic control plan.

Support:

Reduced speed limit signs for school areas and crossings are included in this Manual solely for the purpose of standardizing signing for these zones and not as an endorsement of mandatory reduced speed zones.

SHA 07/09

The "Guidelines and Typicals for School Zones and Areas along State Highways" contains further information reflecting the provisions/requirements of TR Section 21-803.1 and other applicable sections of Maryland law. This document can be obtained from the Maryland State Highway Administration's Office of Traffic & Safety, Traffic Development & Support Division (TDSD) at the address shown on Page i.

Additional information regarding the "Safe Routes to School" Program can be obtained from the Maryland State Highway Administration's Office of Traffic & Safety, Maryland Highway Safety Office (MHSO) at the address shown on Page i.

Section 7A.02 School Routes and Established School Crossings

Support:

The planning criterion for school walk routes might make it necessary for children to walk an indirect route to an established school crossing located where there is existing traffic control and to avoid the use of a direct crossing where there is no existing traffic control.

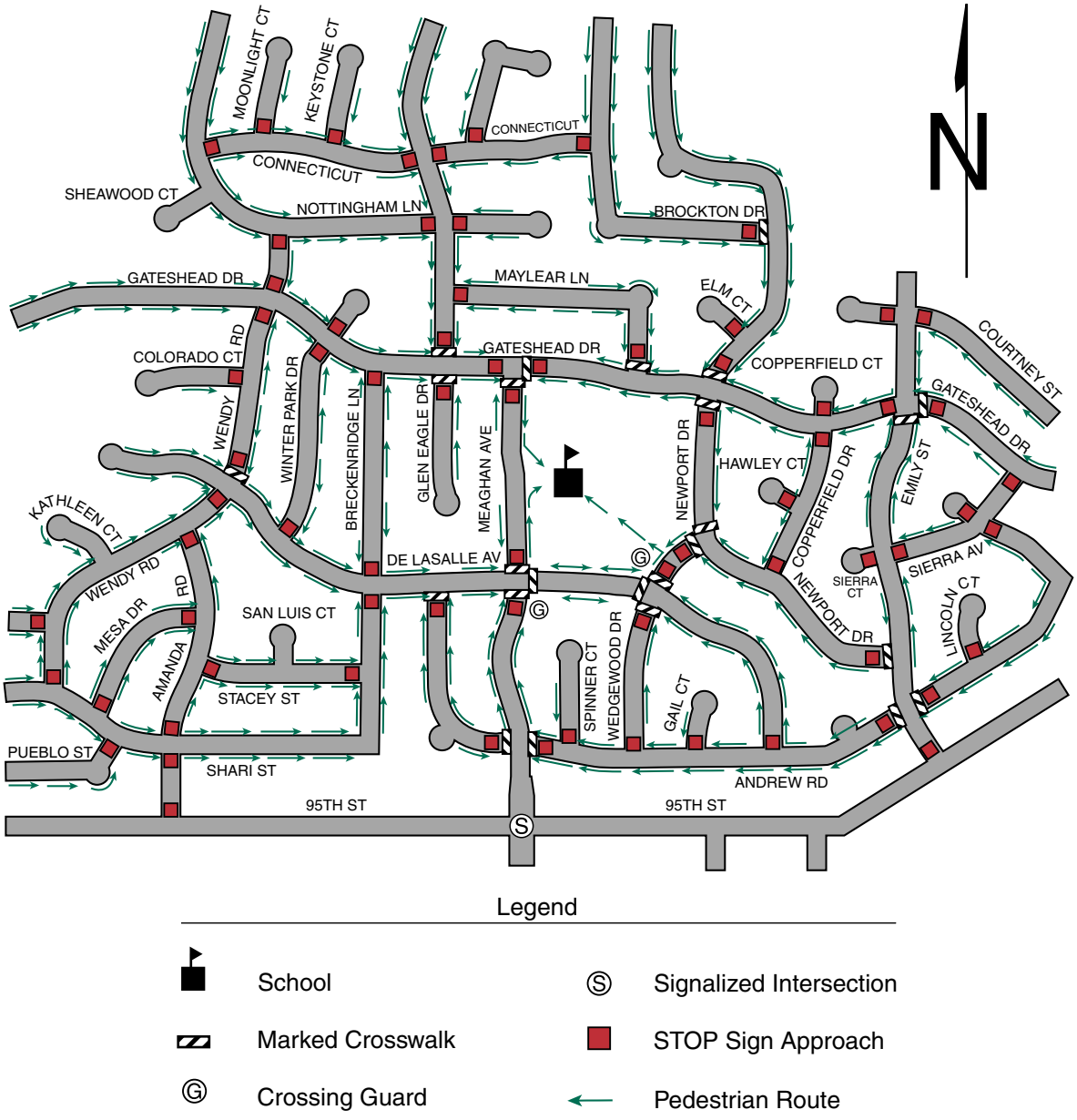
Guidance:

School walk routes should be planned to take advantage of existing traffic controls.

The following factors should be considered when determining the feasibility of requiring children to walk a longer distance to a crossing with existing traffic control:

A. The availability of adequate sidewalks or off-roadway sidewalk areas to and from the location with existing control;
B. The number of students using the crossing;
C. The age levels of the students using the crossing;

Figure 7A-1. Example of School Route Plan Map



D. The total extra walking distance;
E. The presence of a school crossing guard;
F. An unexpected crossing; and
G. The location of the crossing.

Support:

Not all schools need to have school crossings. Not all crosswalks along a school route need be designated as school crossings. This does not prevent the use of crosswalk markings and W11 Series signs at other crosswalks in the same area in accordance with Sections 2C.41 of the MUTCD.

Standard:

School Crossings shall be maintained as marked crosswalks and shall have signs as required by Chapter 7B. Those that are not so designated shall not have the signs required by Sections 7B-08, 7B-09, 7B-11, 7B-12 and 7B-13.

Section 7A.03 School Crossing Control Criteria

Support:

Alternate gaps and blockades are inherent in the traffic stream and are different at each crossing location. For safety, students need to wait for a gap in traffic that is of sufficient duration to permit reasonably safe crossing. When the delay between the occurrence of adequate gaps becomes excessive, students might become impatient and endanger themselves by attempting to cross the street during an inadequate gap.

A recommended method for determining the frequency and adequacy of gaps in the traffic stream is given in the Institute of Transportation Engineers' publication, "School Trip Safety Program Guidelines" (see Section 1A.11).

Section 7A.04 Scope

Standard:

Part 7 sets forth basic principles and prescribes standards that shall be followed in the design, application, installation, and maintenance of all traffic control devices (including signs, signals, and markings) and other controls (including adult crossing guards, student patrols, and grade-separated crossings) required for the special pedestrian conditions in school areas.

Option:

In-roadway signs for school traffic control areas may be used consistent with the requirements of Sections 2B.12, 7B.08, and 7B.09.

Support:

Requirements discussed in Chapter 2A and Section 2B.05 are applicable in school areas.

Section 7A.05 Application of Standards

Support:

Sections 1A.02 and 1A.07 contain information regarding the application of standards.

Section 7A.06 Engineering Study Required

Support:

Section 1A.09 contains information regarding engineering studies.

Section 7A.07 Maintenance of Traffic Control Devices

Support:

Section 1A.05 contains information regarding the maintenance of traffic control devices.

Section 7A.08 Placement Authority

Support:

Section 1A.08 contains information regarding placement authority for traffic control devices.

Section 7A.09 Unauthorized Devices and Messages

Support:

Sections 1A.01 and 1A.08 contain information regarding unauthorized devices and messages.

Section 7A.10 Meaning of Standard, Guidance, Option, and Support

Support:

The introduction to this Manual contains information regarding the meaning of the headings Standard, Guidance, Option, and Support, and the use of the words shall, should, and may.